UNITED NATIONS **ST**

Secretariat

ST/IC/1995/83/Add.1
22 March 1996

INFORMATION CIRCULAR

To: Members of the staff

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management

Subject: COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION FOR PROMOTION TO THE PROFESSIONAL CATEGORY OF STAFF MEMBERS FROM OTHER CATEGORIES

Addendum

1. The purpose of the present addendum is to provide further information on the format of the oral portion of the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category of staff members from other categories. As approved by the Secretary-General upon the recommendation of the Staff-Management Coordination Committee at its twentieth session, the oral examination will measure the following performance dimensions: oral communication; initiative; adaptability; negotiating skills; and potential for leadership.

2. The oral examination will comprise two separate exercises: an oral presentation and a group exercise. The oral examination will constitute 20 per cent of the marks of the examination process. The oral presentation will account for 8 per cent of the points assigned to the oral examination, and the group exercise will account for 12 per cent of those points. The weight of the four performance dimensions measured by the group exercise, i.e., initiative, adaptability, negotiating skills and potential for leadership will be equally distributed, with each performance dimension accounting for 3 per cent of the weight for the group exercise.

Oral presentation

3. For all occupational groups, the standardized format of the oral presentation will include a 5-minute presentation of a general nature on a topic broadly related to the occupational group concerned. Each candidate will draw two topics at random from a selection prepared in advance and choose one of the topics. The candidate will then have 10 minutes to prepare an oral presentation on the selected topic. Following the presentation, the Board of Examiners will

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have an opportunity to ask two questions for clarification or amplification of any of the points made by the candidate. After the presentation and related questions, the Board will ask three other questions of a general nature also broadly related to the occupation.

4. The presentation and responses to questions of the oral presentation will be evaluated in accordance with a rating scale designed to assess the candidate's ability to comprehend topics and questions, to communicate with others and to present and illustrate with examples his or her views in a clear, logical and understandable way. In order to ensure consistency, the marking will be done separately by each member of the Board immediately after each oral presentation and without relation to the grading of the written examination.

Group exercise

5. The group exercise is a leaderless group, non-assigned role exercise. As designed for the oral examination, it will measure the performance dimensions of initiative, adaptability, negotiating skills and potential for leadership. Candidates will be assigned to groups ranging in size from three to six members.

6. The group exercise is a problem-solving exercise, in which a scenario describing a series of problems is presented to the group. The group is allowed a specified length of time to analyse and discuss the problems. The members must arrive at a solution to each problem presented in the exercise as a group, through group discussion. Once the solutions have been reached, depending upon the specific requirements of the exercise, a presentation/discussion/report will be generated to be presented to the board members.

7. Groups may be constituted of candidates drawn from one or several occupational groups.

8. If a candidate is convoked at the oral examination in two occupational groups, scores obtained in the group exercise portion of the oral examination will be applied to botn occupational groups.

Group exercise rating process

9. Candidates participating in the group exercise will be evaluated by a special board made up of members who have received full training in the group exercise methodology. The training will focus on teaching the members to identify, observe, assess, rate and record specific behaviours related to the above-mentioned performance dimensions.

10. During the group exercise itself, the board members will be observing the behaviour of each member in the group, relative to the performance dimensions, and making notes on each candidate's behaviour.

11. Upon completion of the exercise, the board members will rate, on predetermined scales, the behaviour of each candidate according to the appropriate performance dimensions.

12. The board members will discuss their ratings and, where discrepancies in ratings occur, will reconcile the ratings. After reconciliation takes place, a total score will be calculated on the basis of the reconciled ratings.

Use of languages

13. Candidates may make the individual oral presentation in English or French or in one of the official languages of the regional commissions other than English or French. In the group exercise candidates must converse in either English or French. Language will be taken into consideration when constituting groups for the group exercise.